



BendBroadband Fiber Optic Installation

USDA Forest Service

Deschutes National Forest and Fremont-Winema National Forests Klamath County, Oregon

Background

The Deschutes National Forest, in cooperation with the Fremont-Winema National Forests, is proposing to issue a special use permit to TDS Telecommunications dba BendBroadband (hereafter BendBroadband). BendBroadband delivers broadband, fiber connectivity, cable television, and telephone services to commercial and residential customers in central Oregon. BendBroadband is planning to improve the high-speed data, video, and telephone system services to their customers in central Oregon. The Forest Service requires an environmental analysis of the proposed special use permit as part of the process for evaluating a Special Use Permit request. The purpose of the Special Use Permit is to authorize use of National Forest System lands for planned expansion and upgrades of its fiber optic services to customers of central Oregon. This letter is to inform you of your opportunity to comment on the proposed action.

Purpose and Need

The Forest Service is proposing to authorize a special use permit to allow BendBroadband to expand and upgrade its services between La Pine and Chemult, OR. This project would allow BendBroadband to alleviate overloaded residential networks, allowing for faster internet connections for the average customer and provide a service redundancy to prevent outages. Completion of this project would also allow customers with high capacity data needs (hospitals, schools, tech companies, and manufactures) faster internet connections, creating opportunity for customers to take advantage of a network typically reserved for large metropolitan areas.

The need for the project comes from shrinking backhaul/transport capability (slower internet connections) in the southern portion of the BendBroadband network. This would allow BendBroadband to re-route high capacity customers to these backhaul routes rather than overloading residential customer circuits. In other words, customers with significantly larger data needs such as hospitals, schools, tech companies, and manufactures would no longer slow down the residential network.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to authorize a special use permit to allow BendBroadband to expand and upgrade its services between La Pine and Chemult, OR. The entire project extends for 35 miles. This permit application covers a 11.5 linear mile segment within the Deschutes and Fremont-Winema National Forests in Klamath County, Oregon (Figure 1). This segment runs along the State Route 97 (SR-97) from Chemult, Oregon north toward Crescent, ending at the



boundary with Oregon State Department of Forestry managed land. It will also cover the National Forest lands at the Rosedale compound and the Crescent Ranger District Administration site (main office) in Crescent.

The entire project route is planned to stay within a previously disturbed highway right-of-way (ROW). This special use permit would cover only the portion of the project which crosses USDA Forest Service (USFS) administered land. The entire proposed project continues to the north, to just south of La Pine, and crosses land owned and/or managed by multiple public and private entities (USFS, Bureau of Land Management, State Department of Forestry, Private Industry, and Private Residential). Land uses include undeveloped lands, rural residential, commercial and municipal, and agricultural activities.

Fiber line conduit would be installed entirely within the existing road right of way of SR 97, generally following a 5-foot offset from the outer edge of the eastern (northbound) right of way. Installation would be accomplished using plow and directional bore techniques to a depth of approximately 36 inches. Access vaults would be installed every 2,500 feet. The vaults will be 24 inches by 36 inches. Construction will take approximately 1 month to complete, beginning in Spring 2020.

Environmental Analysis

The Forest Service expects that no extraordinary circumstances or special conditions will be identified in the environmental analysis. The proposed action is expected to fall within the following category and may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment:

36 CFR 220.6(e)(2) – additional construction or reconstruction of existing telephone or utility lines in a designated corridor

How to Comment

Comments can be emailed to comments@tierra-row.com, please include the Bend Broadband in the subject line. Comments may also be mailed to

Tierra Right of Way LLC
Bend Broadband Comments c/o Theresa Knoblock
1575 E River Road, Suite 201
Tucson, Arizona 85718

Comments should be sent by November 21, 2019.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Theresa Knoblock, NEPA Lead, Tierra Right of Way, LLC, 800-887-0847



Responsible Official

The Responsible Officials will be the Deschutes National Forest Supervisor and the Fremont-Winema National Forests Supervisor.

This scoping letter information has been coordinated with the Chemult Ranger District on the Fremont-Winema National Forests.


Daniel Rife, District Ranger, Crescent Ranger District
Deschutes National Forest


Date

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